

Police report KKK is small, *F Post* *8/21/78* relatively powerless in state

By The Associated Press*

Two undercover police agents who infiltrated Maryland's Ku Klux Klan report that the Klan remains small and relatively powerless in the state, despite apparent surges of activity in recent months.

The officers called the Klan a persistent but ineffective force, with a potential for violence that is limited to small groups of extremists.

Detective Sgt. John Cook, who recently ended two years inside the Klan, said, "Deep down, these people are not bad people. It's a shame they hate so much."

He said the Klan is not the viable political organization its members would like it to be, because changes in society in the last 15 years have shown that people "want to live in peace, and not in the hatred the Klan preaches."

"They can express all the hate they want," he continued, "and express their political beliefs, but when they turn one act into an act of criminal violence, we're going after them with both feet."

Cook and a Carroll County investigator, who asked not to be identified, report that the Klan in Maryland has only about 50 active members out of a roster of 200 to 300.

Anthony LaRicci, Sr., the grand dragon of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in Maryland disputes that figure.

LaRicci says, "We have at least 200 active members," who are augmented by the "silent members" of the "Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan."

The grand dragon, who has had two brushes with the law including a \$500 fine for a 1976 cross-burning, said he does not believe in acts of violence, but would condone them before he would permit a Communist takeover.

LaRicci said the three Klansmen arrested last month in connection with a plot to bomb B'nai Jacob Synagogue in Lochearn were acting as individuals, and without the official sanction of the Klan.

Cook says he thinks the recent arrests "broke up the most viable (violence-prone) group" in the Maryland Klan.

He added that the Klan was badly hurt by publicity from the 1977 case of William Marx Altcheson, the 22-year-old Clarksville, Md., man who pleaded guilty to mailing a letter threatening to kill Coretta Scott King, the widow of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

That case was broken by the unidentified Carroll County investigator. The investigator noted that Altcheson had broken with the Maryland Klan, and joined a more militant Ohio group.